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ABSTRACT

The 26 teaching strategies in this collection originally appeared in IDEAS PLUS, a special publication of the National Council of Teachers of English. The teaching strategies are entitled: (1) "A Dream House" (Thomas M. Cobb); (2) "A Journal-Writing Pot of Gold" (Irina Markova); (3) "Adopt-a-Word" (Annette Matherne); (4) "Contrasting Moods" (Don Shultz); (5) "Describe That Face" (Dorothy A. Winson); (6) "Descriptive Portraits" (Judy Mednick); (7) "How To Beat 'Page Fright'" (Ellen Turlington Johnston-Hale); (8) "Natural Writing--Three Ways" (Jo-Ellen S. Wood); (9) "Noun Poetry" (Peggy Reynolds); (10) "Novel Dialogue" (Ken Spurlock); (11) "Obtaining an Honest Writing Sample" (Jeffrey Golub); (12) "One, Two, Three--Testing" (Clifford Milo); (13) "Poetry a la Emily Dickinson" (Sarah Sherman-Siegel); (14) "Portraits in Poetry" (Marybeth Mason); (15) "Quote for the Day" (Cathie M. Brown); (16) "Search for Identity; Or, What's in a Name?" (Edna L. Neely); (17) "Sentence Combining as a Prereading Activity" (Gary L. McLaughlin); (18) "Speaking Precisely" (Sandra Hochel); (19) "Take This Word and Use It" (Beverly Haley); (20) "Teaching Inferential Thinking" (Mary Bozik); (21) "Tell-and-Show Dictionary" (Kathleen Lask); (22) "Ten Little Letters Standing in a Row" (Robin Hamilton); (23) "The Door" (Thomas Lavassi and Laura Mitchell); (24) "Using Pictures To Teach Poetry" (Grace Cooper); (25) "Write Your Way Out of This One" (Terry Cooper); and (26) "Writing for an Audience" (Shirley Vaux). Appendixes contain a key descriptors index, contributors' comments, and a map of the United States indicating the geographic location of contributors. (RS)

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BRIGHT IDEAS

A TEACHER'S RESOURCE MANUAL

from articles contributed by
The National Council of Teachers of English
and
compiled by
Anna Maria Malkoç and Ruth G. Montalván

English Language Programs Division
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
United States Information Agency
Washington, D.C. 20547

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Published primarily as one of NCTE's "members only" publications, IDEAS PLUS is a special ongoing series of resource booklets made up of contributions from its own professional membership: instructors of English in elementary, junior, and senior high schools and colleges throughout the United States. Reflecting a rich and colorful range of creative talent and imagination, this lively NCTE series, like its sponsoring organization, actively encourages teachers to strive to "continue their professional growth."

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Preface to the Teacher

The twenty-six practical teaching strategies in this collection originally appeared in IDEAS PLUS, a special publication of The National Council of Teachers of English in Urbana, Illinois. (See preceding **Acknowledgements**.)

As their contributions suggest, these innovative English teachers enjoy trying out new ideas and sharing experiences with their teaching colleagues. Their dedication to the teaching profession is also reflected in their candid responses to our question: *What is your personal philosophy or reason for choosing this profession?*

> "In my view, teaching is the most important profession in the world."
>
> "Working with students actively involved in learning is where the real joy of teaching is."
>
> "I chose to be an English teacher because I feel I am teaching the most important skills a student can learn: reading, writing, speaking, and listening."
>
> "One of the most important things we as English teachers can give our students is a love of language—an appreciation of subtle nuances of meaning, for rhythm in poetry, for the power of the word."

(See **Appendix B: Contributors' Comments**.)

We wholeheartedly believe that English teachers around the world—whether their students are native speakers of English or are learning English as a foreign language—share many of these same convictions and sentiments. We also believe that through an exchange of enlightened teaching experiences, not only the teachers who share but ultimately their students in the classroom are immeasurably enriched.

We therefore present this special selection of teaching techniques in the hope that you too, as a teacher of the English language, will enjoy trying them out in your own classroom.

Anna Maria Malkoç
Ruth G. Montalván
compilers

A Dream House

descriptions

Rationale:
Looking ahead to a future home gives students practice in using descriptive details while it stimulates their imagination.

Preparation:
I select several real estate ads* from the newspaper to photocopy, or have students bring in an ad for their dream house. I explain that they are to study the ad and then envision the entire house, basing their mental picture on the facts given in the ad.

Writing Task:
Once the students have a clear mental image of the house, I ask them to select one room to describe in detail. Their written description should include:

- •architectural style
- •shape of the room
- •placement of doors and windows
- •floor covering
- •drapes or curtains
- •wallpapers or color of walls
- •furniture
- •light fixtures
- •artwork
- •view from the window
- •other details (Perhaps a calico cat sleeping in front of the fireplace!)

**real estate ads:* advertisements to sell or rent houses and apartments

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Ritenour High School
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A Journal-Writing Pot of Gold

descriptions

journal writing

Rationale:
Directed journal writing gives students the kind of daily practice in composing they need to turn quantity into quality. I give my students general journal-topic lists which they keep for reference; they are free to write on any of the topics in any entry. (Picking something from the list simply provides a starting point and a direction.) Sometimes I also make specific journal-writing assignments that expand on something we're doing in class.

Preparation:
You can adapt the following topic list to suit your needs—or use it as a guide to draw up your own. In either case, I think you'll be happy with the results.

I also remind students to date each notebook entry, to write every day, and to use both sides of the paper.

Topic List:

1. Begin or end some of your journal entries by completing this statement and commenting on it, if you wish: "Today was like a ...."

2. Start pages of lists of various types and add to the lists at any time. Here are some ideas to get you started:

   Things that make you angry or sad or happy.
   Pet peeves, dislikes.
   Sounds you hear as you sit quietly, or think back over your day.
   Snatches of conversations overheard.
   Books you've read.
   Songs you like.
   Dreams or hopes.
   Memories.
   Questions you'd like answered.
   Things you'd like changed.

Later you can use these lists to write other entries—poems or stories or opinion pieces.

3. Try to explain something that puzzles you.

4. Write your opinion on a current controversial topic such as censorship of rock music, a new school rule, or raising the drinking age.

5. Look at yourself in the mirror for as long as you can stand it. Describe what you see.

6. Tell about a funny (or sad, exciting, frightening, challenging) experience you've had.

7. Describe the most expensive thing you ever bought and how you got the money for it; tell why you wanted it and whether it was worth the price.

8. Describe an older person you know or have known.

9. Describe a person. Include details such as physical characteristics, personality traits, and how others regard that person.

10. What can you tell about a person by stepping into his or her room? What could an outsider tell about you by stepping into your room?

11. Tell about your most prized possession and explain why you treasure it.

12. Based on your experiences, give advice on a particular topic to a younger person.

13. Tell what you like about the area where you live as well as what you don't like about it.

14. If you had only two days left to live, tell how you would spend them.

15. Describe a time when you lost something important to you:

    What were you thinking and feeling?
    What did you do to try to get it back?
    If you got it back—or if you didn't—how did you feel?

Irina Markova
U-32 High School
Montpelier, Vermont

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Adopt-a-Word

pantomime

vocabulary

Rationale:
When a student adopts a word from an assigned vocabulary list, the word then "belongs" to him or her. Whether the word was chosen for its sound, appearance, meaning, or connotations, it holds a personal attraction for that student.

I first thought of the "Adopt-a-Word" idea when I was looking for variety as well as for more active student participation in the weekly vocabulary lessons. Here's how this idea works:

Preparation and Adopting the Word:
Each week I compose a list of 10 words. Some I take from the literature we're studying, some from the grammar text, and one or two from class discussions or writings. After I've pronounced all the words on the list, each student "adopts" one. Adoption means being responsible for making that word understood by, and interesting to, the rest of the class.

Presenting the Word:
Because more than one student will have the same word, I have different students each week do the presentations (though all hand in their written explanations). The student introducing his or her word to the class tells the word's part of speech, derivation, definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and other facts about the word. Besides giving this factual information, the student uses the word in several sentences (with context clues) and tells why the word held a particular interest for him or her.

Pantomiming the Word:
Another form the class presentation can take is the pantomime or mini-presentation. A student may act the word out silently. (To pantomime regicide, one student "crowned" another and then "stabbed" her.)

Reading a Poem Associated with the Word:
Or, the student may present something other students would associate with the word. For the word *infirmity*, one student read the poem "Sick" from Shel Silverstein's book WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS. Using the tactile dimension along with physical movement is a more memorable approach to vocabulary study than the usual "see-hear-write" method.

Writing a Sentence Using the Word:
Another activity I use is asking students to each write a sentence using their word, with no definition provided. The qualification is that the sentence clues must make the meaning of the word clear to the rest of the class. If the sentence fails to do this, class participation helps pinpoint what needs to be done to the sentence for it to clearly show the meaning.

Results:
"Adopt-a-Word" works—test results stand as proof—because students are actively involved in the learning. They feel ownership, responsibility, and caring. And we've all shared in the fun.

Annette Matherne
Northbrook High School
Houston, Texas

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Contrasting Moods

descriptions

paragraphs

visual aids

vocabulary

Rationale:
Focusing on contrasting moods of the same setting can encourage students to produce vivid descriptive writing.

Preparation:
I start by bringing in a large selection of pictures that portray natural elements and landscapes. (Old calendars are a particularly good source.) We discuss how the natural world is subject to constant change and how wide-ranging these changes can be.

Classroom Group Preparation:
Then I select one large photograph and have the class work together in the following steps:

1. Identify and list six to ten nouns for the objects seen in the picture.

2. Create adjectives and descriptive phrases to modify each of the nouns.

3. Think of a possible change that would alter the appearance of the objects in the picture, such as a rainstorm, a fire, snow, people approaching, or an earthquake.

4. Create a new set of adjectives and descriptive phrases to reflect the changes the objects would undergo.

Individual Chart Preparation:
Following this class discussion, each student selects a picture and follows the same four steps. A chart like the one below helps students to generate details:

Nouns	*Descriptive Phrases*	*New Descriptive Phrases*
sea	placid, calm	rough, angry
boat	gently rocking	violently tossed
clouds	soft, billowy	raging, ominous

I circulate around the classroom as the charts are being made and offer help when it is requested.

Paragraph Writing:
Once all the students have completed their charts, I have them begin on the second part of the assignment. They write:

1. A descriptive paragraph of their scene as it appears in the picture;

2. A second paragraph describing the changes they envision in the scene.

Most students find the writing goes smoothly since they have already prepared lists of descriptive terms.

Don Shultz
Dana Junior High School
Arcadia, California

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Describe That Face

descriptions

guessing

Rationale:
This activity gives students practice in developing a paragraph by formulating a topic sentence, using specific details, and maintaining unity.

Preparation:
Cut out and number pictures of faces from magazines. They should all be the same sex, and you may find women's faces more plentiful than men's.

Assigning the Pictures:
Give each student a different picture and have everyone write a paragraph describing the face in the picture. Stress to the students that they should select those details that make the particular face different from all others so that anyone reading the description could identify the correct photograph. Allow 20 minutes or so for the writing. Then collect the pictures and display them so they're visible to all students—perhaps on the chalkboard at the front of the room.

Reading and Guessing:
The students take turns reading their descriptions aloud while the rest of the class tries to identify the face described. They can make their guesses out loud; or, to maintain suspense, they can record the face number on a sheet of paper and compare answers when all descriptions have been read.

Discussion:
Talk about which details are most helpful to the listeners and which kinds of statements provide little clue. Point out any effective topic sentences that tie all the details together and those paragraphs whose details create a unified description.

Overall Impressions:
Then have each student write a topic sentence for his or her magazine face that states the student's overall impression of the face. The descriptive paragraphs can be revised to incorporate the topic sentences.

Dorothy A. Winson
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Descriptive Portraits

descriptions

guessing

interviewing skills

peer editing

Rationale:
One way for students to practice descriptive and concise writing is in writing paragraphs about one another. An additional benefit is that students get to know more about their classmates, so you might try this activity early in the semester.

Interviewing Data:
Ask your students to interview someone they don't know particularly well. This is difficult to do in some classes; just make certain that best friends don't pair up. Explain that students should use the interviews to gather positive facts that make each person special:

Unique physical and personality traits
Interests
Hobbies
Skills
Achievements
Talents
Honors, etc.

Writing the Portrait:
Using this interview data, students describe their partner in a short paragraph. For example:

> Multi-Talented Hunk of Man
>
> He is a handsome 18-year-old; dark skinned, about six feet tall, with a glowing smile and bold brown eyes filled with laughter. He was born with the talent of being able to repair almost anything. Making money is one of his favorite hobbies; spending it is another. In the future he plans to be a skilled engineer, make lots of money, and travel.

Guessing the Identity:
As the students read their descriptive portraits aloud, the other students try to determine the identity of the person described in each paragraph.

Peer Editing:
A possible follow-up is through peer editing. Students working in pairs can spot and correct mechanical errors in their partner's paragraphs.

Judy Mednick
Polytechnic High School
Long Beach, California

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How to Beat "Page Fright"

descriptions

poetry

Rationale:
If students freeze at the thought of filling an empty page with verse, focusing on one specific object in the classroom can help the words start flowing.

Group Warm-Up:
Pick an object in the room. Have the class as a whole answer the following questions orally:

1. What is it?
2. Where is it?
3. How did it get there?
4. How was it put there?
5. Why was it put there?
6. What is it doing?

Record the answers on the chalkboard and encourage the students to move from the general to specific in each answer and to include as many details as possible.

Individual Writing Assignments:
Once my students understand how to sharpen their perception skills by concentrating on one object, I hand out the following assignment:

1. Imagine yourself a photographer. Survey the classroom; then focus on one object. Frame it. Zoom in on it.
2. Ask yourself questions about the object. List as many details as you can. Be vivid and precise.

3. Say something remarkable. Make the ordinary *extraordinary*. Discover what will happen by writing it. Don't stop. Let the words flow. Once the words are down, reshape, reorder, change strong words for weak.

4. When you're pleased with your final verse, recopy it on a new sheet of paper.

Results:
My students have used this method to produce lively, free-flowing verse. Their completed poems are read aloud to the class or posted on the bulletin board.

Here is a poem prepared by one of my students:

> Kim's pink comb
> glimmers
> against slick raven hair,
> sinks slowly, then
> into the mass
> of darkness.

Ellen Turlington Johnston-Hale
Gingerbread House
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

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Natural Writing —Three Ways

descriptions

peer editing

Rationale:
My eighth-graders have fun using objects from nature for writing assignments and in the process they learn to write for several purposes and audiences. Perhaps because they enjoy the writing, the results are of a quality that pleases me, too.

Preparation:
I collect things like shells, feathers, dried flowers and weeds, nuts (in their shells), small rocks, or small potatoes. Then I put two of one type of object—for example, two similar shells—on each student's desk just before class begins. These are the instructions I give to the class:

Assignment I:

1. Write a description of one of the objects on your desk. Your details should distinguish this object from its partner. Leave the written description on your desk.

2. When I call "time," everyone moves to another desk according to my directions.

3. Read the description on the desk you move to. Handle the two objects on the desk and place the one you think fits the written description on top of the paper.

4. Return to your own desk when I call "time" again. If the person who reads your description placed the correct object on your paper, ask your reader which details led to the correct identification. If the wrong object is there, find out what information was lacking to make a correct choice; or find out whether the fault lay in the person's failure to read the description accurately or completely.

5. Write an explanation on the same paper as to why your description worked or didn't work. Also tell what you learned from doing this exercise.

Assignment II:

Write a description of your object for a science book. (You may need to research some special information and terminology before you can write such an assignment.)

Assignment III:

Write a one- or two-page story (or narrative poem) about your object. Decide whom you're writing the story for before you begin.

Discussion:
At the completion of all three writing assignments, we discuss how and why the writing styles vary when the purpose for writing and/or the audience changes.

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Cohasset, Massachusetts

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Noun Poetry

descriptions

nouns

poetry

Rationale:
The following activity can be an effective introduction to a poetry-writing unit. Establishing a structure first means that your students need not worry about format and can concentrate on producing descriptive language.

Preparation:
I bring in a pile of old newspapers and magazines (or ask the students to supply them). Each student selects the picture of a person, place, or thing and then glues or tapes it to a sheet of paper. Then he/she produces a descriptive poem according to the following set of instructions:

Instructions:

Line 1: Choose a noun that describes the person, place, or thing you have selected.

Line 2: Describe this noun with two adjectives joined by the word *and* or *but*.

Line 3: Use a verb form and an adverb to show this noun in a typical action.

Line 4: Think up a comparison beginning with the word *as* or *like* to show a special quality this noun has.

Line 5: Use a phrase beginning with *if only* to express a wish regarding this noun.

Here is a sample poem written by a student:

Fireman.
Strong and fearless.
Fighting courageously.
As brave as a gladiator.
If only I could be a hero!

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Peggy Reynolds
Wooddale High School
Memphis, Tennessee

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Novel Dialogue

dialogues

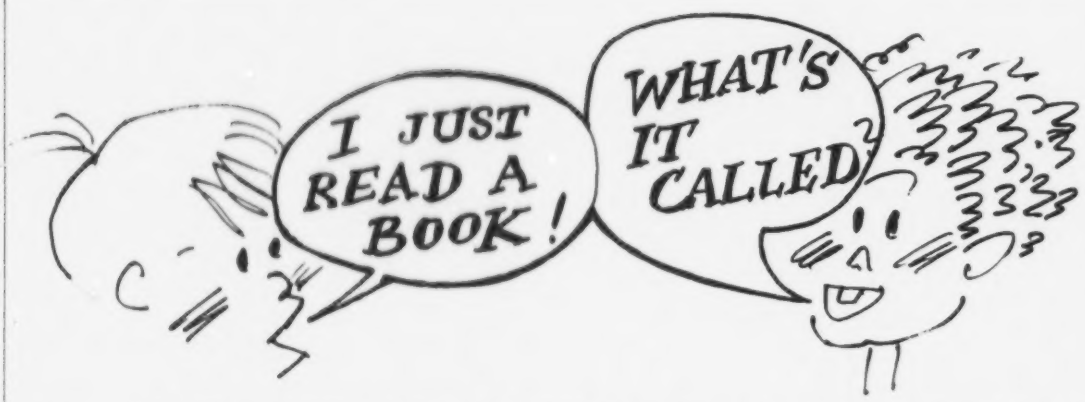
literature

Rationale:
I vary my writing assignments as often as possible to challenge students and keep interest high. In this assignment, students write conversational dialogues based on a story or novel of their choice.

Preparation:
The students first choose out-of-class reading assignments from a list of stories or novels I provide. The options may be varied according to the interests and abilities of the students. I set a deadline by which the reading is to be completed. (Students are more likely to meet the deadline when they know ahead of time that they will be writing about their books in class on the day of the deadline.)

Directions:
On the writing day, I give students these directions on a handout sheet:

> Write an imaginary dialogue between you and another student about the book you have read. Assume that the other student has not read the book. Your dialogue should include references to the *author*, *plot*,*setting*, *characters*, and *theme*, but you don't have to use these exact terms in your dialogue. Also include your overall impression of the book.
>
> The class period will be divided into three parts:
>
> 1. *Prewriting* (5 minutes): List the questions you think the other student might ask you about your book.
>
> 2. *Writing* (30 minutes): Write a dialogue based on the questions you listed in prewriting. Both questions and answers should sound normal and conversational, like a casual exchange between two friends. An example follows:



Me: I just finished a good book. I had to read it for English, but it turned out to be really interesting.

Amy: Yeah? What's it called?

Me: *Huckleberry Finn.*

Amy: Who is it by?

Me: Mark Twain. At least, that's the name he wrote under. His real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens.

From this point, continue until you have included all the important information about the book and explained your view of it.

3. *Rewriting/Revision* (5 minutes): You won't have time to write a complete second draft, but in the time left at the end of the class period, you can reread your dialogue and check spelling, punctuation, and usage.

Feedback:
My students say they like trying to write the way they talk. One class period provides just about the right amount of time for writing one dialogue. They all manage to complete the assignment, and most of the dialogues *do* sound like two teenagers talking about a book—complete with slang, interruptions for explanations, and even occasional "silly" questions and answers.

Ken Spurlock
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Covington, Kentucky

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Obtaining an Honest Writing Sample

writing skills

Rationale:
At the beginning of the school year, I want a writing sample from each student for diagnostic purposes.

Approach:
I used to have trouble getting samples of more than a few sentences until I began using the following approach. I tell my students:

> You may write a poem, a letter, a story, a newspaper report; use any form you feel is appropriate. But, whatever you do, FIB!* The entire composition is to be one outrageous fabrication—the wilder, the better!

Results:
Following this approach, I routinely receive papers that are one to three pages in length. There is no problem persuading students to share their writing with classmates, either!

**to fib*—to tell a trivial lie. [This is not as harsh as saying "to lie" or "to tell a lie," which are much stronger accusations.]

Jeffrey Golub
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Shelton, Washington

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One, Two, Three —Testing

reading skills

tests

Rationale:
In lieu of an oral or written book report, I sometimes ask students to devise an exam for the book they have read. If another student reads one of these books, he or she may elect to take the test for a bonus grade. The assignment goes something like this:

Assignment

1. Write an examination with an answer key for the book you read. The exam should include a short-answer section and an essay section.

2. Include 10 true-and-false, 10 multiple-choice, and 10 matching questions in the short-answer section.

3. The essay section should contain three questions. Consider theme, plot, setting, and characterization when you devise these questions.

4. Be sure the directions for taking the test are clear.

5. The key should include (a) the answers to the short-answer questions and (b) an answer in outline form for each of the essay questions.

Clifford Milo
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Suffern, New York

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Poetry à la Emily Dickinson

poetry

reading skills

symbolism

Preparatory Reading and Discussion:
Ask your students to read Emily Dickinson's poem "Fame."

Fame

Fame is a bee.
It has a song—
It has a sting—
Ah, too, it has a wing.

*Emily Dickinson**

Prior to the reading, you may wish to discuss concepts such as:

figurative language
metaphorical expression
symbolism
abstract nouns
literary theme

Or, you may wish to wait until the students have read and responded to the poem.

When your students have read the poem and had a few moments to reflect, ask them:

1. What do you think Emily Dickinson is trying to say to her readers?

2. How would you interpret *Fame's* "song"? "sting"? "wing"?

**Fame* is reprinted by permission of the Publisher and Trustees of Amherst College from POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, © 1955.

Brainstorming for Descriptions:
Following a discussion of the poem's language and theme, tell the students that they will be writing poems in the same format as Dickinson's "Fame." Help them brainstorm nouns for abstract concepts such as *anger, imagination, power, wealth,* and so on. Record their suggestions on the chalkboard.

At this point, ask the students to each choose one noun from the chalkboard and make a list of words and phrases that describe it. For example, the noun *anger* might elicit these words and phrases:

Destructive
Raging
Can't be bottled up.

Then ask the students to select an animal possessing some of the same qualities, such as a tiger for *anger*. In a second list, they will list the qualities or attributes of the animal they choose. For example:

Sharp claws
A fast runner
Fierce
Takes its prey by surprise.
Protects its young (etc.).

Writing à la Emily Dickinson:
As they begin to write, the students must decide which of the possible comparisons between the abstract concept and the animal will make the best poem, and which comparison might provide the "twist" for the last line.

For instance, a student comparing *anger* to a *tiger* could try to imagine anger, in turn, as:

Having sharp claws
Being a fast runner
Being fierce
Taking its prey by surprise
Protecting its young (etc.)

In this example, a possible last line might be created by changing *Protecting its young* to *It protects its own.*

Suggest to the students that they experiment until they find a comparison for the last line which, like Dickinson's, causes the reader to stop and think.

In writing their poems, the students follow the format below. (Note that they may substitute *is* or another verb for *has*.)

_____ is a _____.
It has a _____ —
It has a _____ —
Ah, too, it has a _____.

Here's an example written by one of my students:

> Love is a mole.
> It can be secretive—
> It can build tunnels—
> Ah, too, it can be blind.
>
> *Masahiro Masamoto*

Results:
I have found that far from being limiting, the requirements imposed by this format can produce striking and highly original metaphors.

My students illustrate, combine, and bind their finished poems into a classroom poetry anthology. As a follow-up to this exercise, I make available copies of other poems by Emily Dickinson as well as other poems that illustrate the use of symbolism.

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Portraits in Poetry

acrostics

cinquains

interviewing skills

limericks

poetry

Rationale:
Writing poetry teaches students to focus on the essence of a subject, to write concisely, and to choose words and arrange them for a vivid, exact picture.

I want my students (who lean toward wordy, vague prose) to get plenty of exercise in paring down and searching for accurate, lively word choices. But I don't want to scare them off with the word "poetry," so I offer light verse forms to choose from for this assignment along with an interesting topic: each other! As a bonus, the activity gives practice in interviewing techniques, those speaking and listening skills that sometimes get shortchanged in the classroom.

Pre-Interviewing Preparation:
Before the interviewing begins, I have the students generate a list of possible questions to ask classmates about themselves. I write these on the chalkboard as we discuss together which questions will draw out interesting responses and which will yield only brief factual answers. I emphasize that prepared questions should be used only as a guide. A good interviewer is a good listener who asks questions based on the interviewee's responses rather than being restricted to a preconceived agenda.

I try to pair students who don't know one another well. The exchange of interviews should produce information about each person that makes him or her stand apart from others in the class. Another option is to invite an interesting guest, such as a foreign exchange student, to class for a group interview.

If we do this activity at the beginning of the semester, I use the "portraits" as a way for the students to introduce themselves to one another. If I save it for later in the course, we tailor the interviews to produce facts about the interviewee that most people in the class won't know.

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I tell the students they'll be using the information in the interviews to introduce the interviewee or to show some aspect of that person that most people aren't aware of. I encourage them to draw out more information than they'll use. That way they'll have enough details to try several kinds to focus in their articles until they discover the most interesting slant.

Then I explain that they'll use the details to produce personality portraits written in the poetic form of a *cinquain*, a *name acrostic*, or a *limerick*. Most of my students are familiar with these forms, but they need a review and an example of each. So I furnish them with a sheet containing that information and encourage them to experiment with different forms, different groups of details, and a variety of word choices and arrangements before selecting the one they'll use as their final portrait.

"Poetic Portrait" Formats:

1. *Cinquain:* a five-line poem.

   Title: Use the person's name.
   Line 1: Give two adjectives describing the person.
   Line 2: Begin with an *-ing* verb that tells what the person does.
   Line 3: Begin with an *-ing* verb that tells what the person does.
   Line 4: Begin with an *-ing* verb that tells what the person does.
   Line 5: Use another word or name for the person.

   Example:

   Mrs. Mason
   Nervous but enthusiastic
   Trying to remember 150 new names and faces
   Shuffling from room to room
   Hoping we will enjoy this semester
   A new teacher to Mt. View.

2. *Name Acrostic:* the first letters of each line spell out the person's name.

   Example:

   Mason
   Monday morning dieter, religiously
   A sinner by noon.
   Struggling to juggle all her hats
   Of wife, mother, teacher.
   Never anxious for vacations to end.

3. *Limerick:* a short, humorous poem that follows a particular pattern.

Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme A.

Lines 3 and 4 rhyme B.

Lines 1, 2, and 5 have eight to ten syllables each.

Lines 3 and 4 have five to seven syllables each.

A Line	(8-10 syllables)
A Line	(8-10 syllables)
B Line	(5-7 syllables)
B Line	(4-7 syllables)
A Line	(8-10 syllables)

Example:

> Mason
>
> There once was a teacher named Mason.
> In her class, no time was a-wastin'.
> If ten classes you've missed,
> Be prepared to be hissed,
> And enrolled in a high school in Payson.

Oral Presentation:
When the poetry portraits are complete, I ask the students, one by one, to write their poems on the chalkboard and then read them aloud to introduce the person portrayed.

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Quote for the Day

bulletin boards

quotations

visual aids

Rationale:
Wisdom passes from age to age—from mind to mind and soul to soul—in the form of recorded words. I post some of these words of wisdom in my classroom to stimulate a variety of responses from students. I call this my "Quote for the Day."

Bulletin Board Format:
I display our daily quotes on a bulletin board near the door of the classroom for all to see clearly. Each quote is enclosed within a poster board frame slightly larger than the 8½"-x-11" sheets bearing the individual messages.

The poster includes (a) the author's name, (b) the source of the quotation, and (c) any useful commentary I have on the circumstances surrounding the creation of the piece.

Sources for Quotations:
My stockpile of printed quotations grows each term as both my students and I discover new ones to add from every source imaginable:

Song lyrics
Poetry anthologies
Inspirational books
Graffiti
Novels
Plays
News stories
BARTLETT'S (and other) collections of quotations, etc.

I file the quotations under subject headings such as "Courage," "Search for Identity," or "Humor." (Filing can also be done according to author or style.)

Using the Quotations:
Each time I change the quotation in the frame, I have a specific use for its theme or style in mind. For example:

1. To launch a discussion of the day's lesson.

2. To analyze sentence structure, diction, style, or figures of speech.

3. To relate to a school, community, or national event or issue as a stimulus for a writing assignment.

4. To serve as a journal-entry starter.

5. To inspire students to create original quotations. (The best of these go into the quotations file for classroom use and for posterity.)

6. To provide a source for personal collections of quotations. (Many students voluntarily copy quotations into notebooks, sometimes illustrating or commenting on them.)

7. To brainstorm other related quotations, or quotations that seem to convey the opposite message; e.g., "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" from the *Old Testament*, in contrast to "Turn the other cheek" from the *New Testament*.

Results:
The "Variations on a theme" or the opposing philosophies can then inspire lively discussion or writing as well as enlarge the students' understanding of a work of literature currently being studied.

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Search for Identity; Or, What's in a Name?

interviewing skills

names

vocabulary

Rationale:
No topic attracts teenagers more than the topic of themselves (and appropriately so). I take advantage of that interest in self to teach research, interviewing, and writing skills. Each student looks for information about his or her own name—conducts a personal search for identity.

"Names" Vocabulary:
To begin, I ask the students to acquire a "names" vocabulary.*

I. *Names Indicating Family Status:*

family name / last name / surname (synonymous)
given name / first name / "Christian" name (synonymous)

II. *Names Indicating Marital Status (for Women):*

maiden name (unmarried family name)
married name (the family name of the wife's husband)

III. *Names Indicating Occupations*

nom de plume / pen name / pseudonym (synonymous)

IV. *Alternative Names:*

alias / AKA (Also Known As, often used for criminals) (synonymous)
namesake (named in honor of someone, often a family member)
nickname (a shortened name or substitute name)
patronym (a name derived from the father's or ancestor's name)

**categorized by Editors.*

Preparatory Discussion:
Then we talk about such topics as:

1. The care people take in naming a pet/building/invention/discovery, etc.
2. The way parents choose a name for a baby.
3. How and why some people change their names.
4. The recent trends in a wife's taking/not taking her husband's surname or hyphenating his surname and hers.
5. How we attach emotions to certain names. (For example, we expect someone named Alexander Charleston Fremont Fairchild III to be quite formal.)
6. How sometimes a person's name seems to fit his/her personality. (Or is it that the personality develops to fit the name?)

This discussion leads to some comments about how parents or grandparents will sometimes say such things as:

> *"A Smith doesn't pick fights."*
>
> *"The Hamiltons have always been excellent mathematicians."*

Names sometimes define or limit who and what we are or become. A person may feel the need to "live up to" a name or, conversely, "live down" a "bad" name.

Assignment:
Now the time is right to make the assignment.
I explain that each student will research and write about his or her own name—both given name and surname. The search has two parts:

A. *Library Research:*

First, I send the students to:

1. Look in several books about names.
2. Take notes.
3. Document what they find.

B. *Personal Interviews:*

Then, they talk with parents and other adult family members. I provide the following questions as a guide, telling the students they're free to add to the list should "interesting twists" develop:

GIVEN NAME

1. Were you named for anyone? If so, for whom?
   Why?
   What is your reaction?

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2. When and how did your parents decide on your name?
3. Do you have a nickname? If so, is there a story behind it?
4. What are your feelings about your name?
   What is the best thing about it?
   What is the worst?
5. How widely used is your name?
   Name some famous people, both living and dead, who have your name.
   How many people do you know personally who share your name?
6. If you'd been born 10, 20, or 50 years ago, would you be likely to have this name?

SURNAME

1. What is the origin of your name?
   Is it a *patronym?* (like *MacNeil, Johnson, O'Casey,* etc.)
   Is it a *place name?* (like *Dell, Mountain, Boston,* etc.)
   Is it a *nickname?* (like *Little, Black, Short,* etc.)
   Is it an *occupation name?* (like *Smith, Taylor, Farmer, Miner,* etc.)
2. Has your surname been spelled the same way for as long as your family can remember?
   If not, what circumstances surrounded the change?
3. How common is your surname?
   How many people do you know personally who share this name?
   Any famous people?
   Why might there be more people with your surname in some areas than in others?

Writing the Name Essay:
When the students complete their data, they follow the usual theme-writing procedure to develop personal essays about their names. I encourage them to focus on something that makes their names truly individual, something that makes that name stand apart from others even when they have many elements in common.

Sharing the Essays:
Then we all have fun—and get to know one another better—sharing the results through oral readings or through a class anthology of name essays.

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Sentence Combining as a Prereading Activity

literature

sentence combining

Rationale:
This classroom activity introduces students to a literary work and gives them varied opportunities to practice sentence-combining skills. I've had success using the activity with several different literary works.

Teacher's Prereading Preparation:
Before class, I write an original set of short sentences suggesting a general idea about a literary work that students are to read. Here are two examples:

Black Boy is a novel.
Richard Wright wrote *Black Boy*.
It is autobiographical.
It shows troubles.
All of us need to understand these troubles.

George Orwell wrote *Animal Farm*.
Animal Farm is a fable.
Animal Farm is a satire.
It shows something about dictators.
Dictators can be very cruel.

I also "uncombine" a sentence from the work itself to create a sentence-combining problem. For example, I took a sentence from Anton Chekhov's "The Bet":

"Capital punishment kills a man at once, but lifelong imprisonment kills him slowly."

I reworked it to read:

Punishment kills.
It kills a man.
It kills at once.
The punishment is capital.
Imprisonment kills.
It kills a man.
It kills slowly.
The imprisonment is lifelong.

Here are two other "uncombined" examples:

From Steinbeck's OF MICE AND MEN:

The dog was old.
The dog got to his feet.
The dog moved slowly
The dog moved stiffly.
The dog moved the leash.
The leash pulled.
The pulling was gentle.

From Orwell's ANIMAL FARM:

The animals were amazed.
The animals were terrified.
The animals were huddling together.
The animals watched the line.
Pigs were in a line.
The line was long.
The pigs marched slowly.
The pigs marched around the yard.

Classroom Prereading Activities:

In class, I display the sentence-combining problems with the overhead projector. The students write out possible combinations, then we go over the various combinations. Class discussion can demonstrate why the sentence:

"Richard Wright's BLACK BOY is an autobiographical novel that shows us troubles all of us need to understand."

is superior to:

"BLACK BOY by Richard Wright is a novel that is autobiographical and that shows us troubles all of us need to understand."

We follow the same procedure with the sentence that I've "uncombined" from the original work. Students suggest various combinations, and I read the original sentence from the literary work. Then we discuss the thought expressed in the sentence.

Assigning the Reading:

Next I make the reading assignment, confident that students already have some familiarity with the literary work.

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Speaking Precisely

expressions

guessing

Rationale:
The following activity demonstrates to students that specific and concrete words and examples are far more effective in communicating ideas than are abstract and general terms. The activity also gives students experience in the most common public speaking situation— impromptu speaking. They enjoy being before the class for a short interval without the pressure of preparing a speech.

Preparation:
First, I draw up a list of common and general words and phrases, and write these expressions on individual cards. (Current slang, cliches, and popular expressions work well.) Here are some possibilities for you to consider:

Bad music
Boring lecture
Coward
Feeling blue
Good citizen
Good teacher
Great movie
It's a deal!
Jazz
Nice looking
Rude person
School (or city) motto
Spoiled brat
Unfair contest
You hit the nail on the head!

Instructions to the Speakers/Listeners:
Then I give the following directions to the students:

1. In a moment you will draw a card bearing a word or phrase. You are to give an impromptu speech to the class defining the word/s you have drawn. Your goal is to have the other students in the class guess what is on your card.

2. You may define the words in any way you wish. For example, you may use: synonyms or antonyms, comparisons or contrasts, or examples, or all of these. But under no circumstances may you use in your speech any of the words on the card or any of their derivatives.

3. You have up to one minute to speak. If you are still speaking when one minute is up, a stop card will be shown, and you are to end by finishing your sentence. When you finish, all members of the audience will write down what they think your word or phrase is.

4. As members of the audience, you are to be silent. Resist the temptation to call out words. Wait until a speaker is finished and then write down the word or phrase you believe the speaker is defining.

Scheduling and Timing the Speakers:
I define the order in which the students will speak: voluntary (random) order, alphabetical, or by seating arrangement. I have each student pick a card just before speaking, so that no one has more time in which to prepare. Also, I select a student to time the speakers and to hold up the stop card.

Listening Tasks and Feedback:
As each impromptu speech is completed, the students jot down what they think the mystery word or phrase is. Once all the speeches have been given, we discuss each word or phrase to see how many students identified it correctly. We also discuss the incorrect guesses and why some phrases were easy to guess and why some were difficult.

I point out how listeners usually do not have a clear understanding of a speaker's ideas when abstract terms are used to describe general terms. For example, using an expression like *terrific show* to define a good movie may be unclear. The message will be more obvious if the speaker describes some popular and acclaimed movies.

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Take This Word and Use It

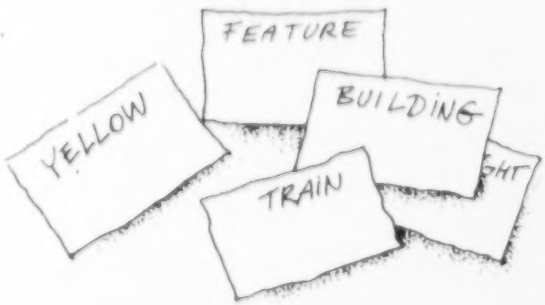
grammar

Rationale:
I have found that a simple activity based on one word can introduce a short grammatical unit while the sample sentences are still fresh in the students' minds. The activity uses only the first or last 10 minutes of class on two days, and can be repeated at regular/irregular intervals throughout the course.

Assigning the Task:
I pass out small slips of paper, just large enough for one sentence. I select a common word (such as *yellow* or *right*, etc.) and ask the students to write a sentence using that word.

Selecting the Sentences:
I collect the slips and read through the sentences before the next class period. I select those that illustrate good and bad aspects of writing that I want to point out to the class. Such features might include:

The word used as different parts of speech.
Sentence fragments and run-ons.
Varying word order.
Problems with spelling and grammar.
Variety in sentence construction.
Sentence types, such as simple or complex, imperative of interrogative, balanced or periodic.



Providing Feedback
Since the sentences are turned in anonymously, no one feels embarrassed when I suggest corrections. In this way the students get nearly immediate feedback on this short assignment.

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Teaching Inferential Thinking

guessing

inferential thinking

Rationale:
Here's an activity that helps students to become aware of inferential thinking and to realize how subjective and inaccurate inferences can be.

Assignment I:

First, I hand out a copy of QUESTIONNAIRE I to each student and allow 15 minutes for the students to complete it.

QUESTIONNAIRE I

Do not put your name on this paper. Answer the following questions, giving your first reaction and not trying to look for the best answer. You may put down more than one answer for each item or none at all, but try to answer as many questions as possible.

1. What is your favorite TV show?
2. What is your favorite song?
3. What is your favorite movie?
4. What is your favorite expression?
5. What is your favorite color?
6. What is your favorite type of weather?
7. What is your favorite book?
8. What is your favorite sport?
9. What is your favorite smell?
10. What is your favorite sound?
11. What is your pet peeve?
12. If you were a member of a rock group, what would be the group's name?

After 15 minutes, I collect the questionnaires, mix them up, and hand one to each student. (I check to see that no one has received his or her own questionnaire.)

Assignment II:

Next, I hand out copies of QUESTIONNAIRE II to the students and have them fill it out overnight, basing their responses on the copy of QUESTIONNAIRE I that they received.

QUESTIONNAIRE II

You have been given some information about a classmate. You are to use that information to make inferences about that person as you answer the following questions. Draw the best conclusions you can and state the reasons for your conclusions. Some of you will feel more certain of your answers than others.

1. Is your classmate male or female?
   Why do you think so?
2. Describe your classmate's physical appearance.
   Why do you think so?
3. What is your classmate's favorite subject in school?
   Why do you think so?
4. What is your classmate's favorite food?
   Why do you think so?
5. What is your classmate's favorite pastime?
   Why do you think so?
6. Describe how your classmate's bedroom would be decorated.
   Why do you think so?
7. What job will your classmate have 10 years from now?
   Why do you think so?
8. What will your classmate's home or apartment be like 10 years from now?
   Why do you think so?

Describing and Guessing:
The following day, the students each take a turn at describing their classmate's responses to QUESTIONNAIRE I and their own inferences about the classmate. Each student concludes by guessing who the classmate is. To maintain suspense, keep the classmates' identities secret until the end. The other students might also want to try to identify each mystery classmate.

Feedback:
The ensuing discussion should emphasize how often we make inferences without realizing it and how often these inferences are wrong or only partially correct. The discussion should touch on stereotyping and how it affects the way we communicate with, and relate to, others.

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Tell-and-Show Dictionary

descriptions

television

vocabulary

Rationale:
Today's students may spend as many hours per week viewing television programs and movies as they spend in school. Because film media wield enormous power—and because film techniques have parallels in composition and literature—I've designed a project to raise my students' awareness of what they're seeing and how that influences their beliefs and behavior.

Presenting and Discussing Basic Film Terms:
On the first day of the project, I provide the students with a list of basic film terms like the ones below. I explain and show examples of each term as we move through the list together:

Pan (panoramic) shot: shows a wide view of scenery
Long shot: includes the focal object and its surroundings
Medium shot: shows the subject with a little background
Close-up: shows only part of the subject (fills the frame)
Zoom: special lens to create appearance of distance changes
High angle: the camera looks up at the subject, making it appear large and powerful
Flat angle: camera/subject are level, suggesting equality or honesty
Depth-of-field focus: one point in the picture is in focus, the rest is blurred
Establishing shot: the scene that sets the time and place of action
Superimposition: two pictures taken on the same frame; a double exposure
Overexposed: too much light
Normal lens: depicts things without distortion
Telephoto lens: makes objects appear flat and bunched
Wide angle lens: makes objects appear to be spread out

Preparing the Materials and Compiling the "Dictionaries":
The next day I bring supplies in to the classroom:

Stacks of old magazines
Scissors
Glue
Construction paper
Stapler

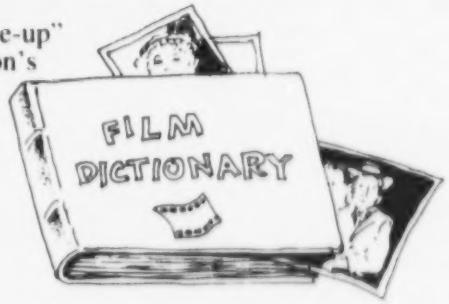
Students can use these to produce their personal film dictionaries with definitions and illustrations. In some classes, I ask students to take their own photos to illustrate the terms.

As students collect magazine pictures to illustrate the terms, they begin to compile their dictionaries, using a separate sheet for each term. Each page contains the picture example of the term and its definition. When all the terms are illustrated, the pages are fastened together into booklet form. As the students work in this informal atmosphere, the lively exchange of comments and observations become a real learning experience.

Using the "Dictionaries":
Now when we view a film in class or discuss a movie that many of us have seen recently, we can use the correct terms, observe the techniques applied, and analyze the effects on the viewer created by the photography.

We also apply the film terms to a writer's techniques when we read a play or a story, commenting on why an approach works or fails. For example, the opening scene or paragraph may be the "establishing shot" that sets the mood and prepares the reader for what follows. We can ask: *Does it work? Why/why not?*

A detailed description of a particular character is a "close-up" allowing the reader to become acquainted with the person's traits, qualities, and possible motives. When students learn to think of a story in visual terms, their enjoyment and understanding rise sharply.



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Ten Little Letters Standing in a Row

poetry

Rationale:
Don't reject this idea out of hand!
It sounds "gimmicky," but the results suggest that sometimes restrictions can liberate, not limit, the imagination.

Selecting the Letters:
First, choose five letters at random. For example: *a k s c r*

Then choose five more. For example: *t b m o l*

Selecting the Words:
Now, use the first five letters (*a k s c r*) as the initial letters of words in lines 1, 3, and 5.

Use the second series of five letters (*t b m o l*) in lines 2 and 4, to make up a five-line poem.

Example Outline:

1.	a	k	s	c	r
2.	t	b	m	o	l
3.	a	k	s	c	r
4.	t	b	m	o	l
5.	a	k	s	c	r

Note that words must follow the order in which the letters were originally chosen, but other words may be added to each line.

(Note also that *x*, *z* and *q* are difficult letters to work with.)

Results:
Here's an example of the product you can expect from students:

The Poem

*A*fter *k*illing a *s*nake my brother *c*ried and *r*an.
*T*he waves *b*roke then and *m*ountains frowned *o*ver *l*ong shadows
*a*wkward on *k*ind *s*hores. He *c*ringed and *r*emembered
*t*he sharp *b*reak of the *m*ottled body. *O*ur *l*ake
*a*nswered *k*eening *s*ongs that *c*rashed and *r*olled at our feet.

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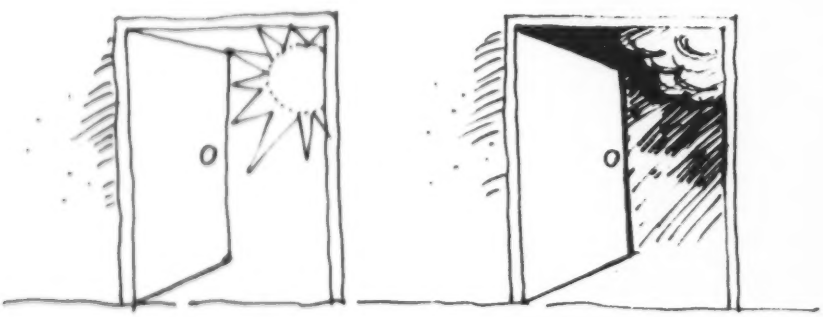
The Door

descriptions

Rationale:
This 50-minute, in-class writing/revision exercise stimulates creativity and encourages students to make vivid, precise word choices.

If you like, it can be extended to a three-day sequence:

1. Drafting
2. Revising
3. Sharing



Setting the Scene:
I begin by shutting the door to the classroom and writing two "leads" on the board:

> When I walk out that door, I want....
>
> When I walk out that door, I don't want....

I suggest a frame of mind by saying:

> Write whatever in your wildest imagination you *don't* want to see or do when you leave this room; and then what, more than anything in the world, you *want* to see or have happen to you when you walk out that door at the end of the hour.

I don't talk about revision at this point or mention that we may read some of these adventures aloud. I don't want the students to worry about the final product in the early stages of its development.

Completing the "Lead" Sentences:
After about 20 minutes, I ask the students to stop and rewrite, improving verbs first. I encourage them to look for particular qualities of emotion, shades of meaning: *dashed*, for example, instead of *went*. Then they repeat the process for nouns and modifiers.

Peer Editing:
At this point, I ask the students to:

1. Exchange papers.
2. Underline what they consider to be the most effective word choices in the paper.
3. Indicate the overall impression the words convey:

   Do they seem *melancholy? Wistful? Vigorous? Cheerful? Dreamy?* (etc.)

Reading and Guessing:
Finally, time permitting, I ask volunteers to read whole paragraphs, selected sentences, or favorite words only. Then the rest of us try to guess the tone of the piece:

Is it *delight? Anxiety? Panic? Tranquility?* (etc.)

Thomas Lavazzi and Laura Mitchell
Southwest Missouri State University
Springfield, Missouri

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Using Pictures to Teach Poetry

inferential thinking

poetry

visual aids

Rationale and Preparation:
Students often complain to me that they don't like poetry because they can't understand it. I recently thought of a way to help students more readily "clue in" to the subjects and emotions described in poems. As I am reading through the dozen or so magazines to which I subscribe, I often cut out pictures of interesting, dramatic, or unusual people, scenes, or landscape as inspiration for my own writing and painting. I realized that the same pictures and photographs that evoked strong feelings in me would probably evoke strong feelings in my students, and thus help them understand the inspiration for and development of a poem. In addition, the cutout pictures provide a handy reference in the discussion and use of figurative language and figures of speech.

Setting the Mood with Pictures:
I begin by passing a picture around the class, asking students to describe both the picture and the feelings it evokes. To help them to develop thinking skills, I follow up with additional questions along the same lines, rather than supplying the answers.

Sometimes I use a photograph clipped from a news magazine, showing for example, the anguished face of an elderly village woman. I ask:

What is this woman's state of mind?

Why do you think she looks sad?

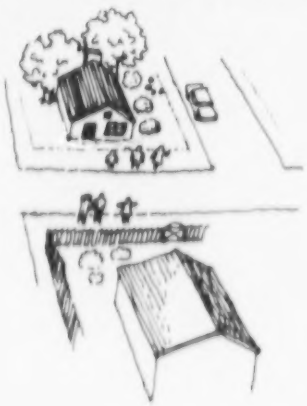
How do you feel about her?

What words and phrases best describe her?

If you were trying to describe this picture to someone who had not seen it, to what would you compare her actions and expressions?

Group Vocabulary Warm-Up:
I list the students' short answers on the chalkboard. Whenever possible, I use gentle probing to encourage students to use *metaphors* and *similes* in their answers. For instance, I might refer to an aerial view of a town and ask:

Do the tiny human figures in this picture remind you of anything?



Holding up a picture of an elephant, I might ask:

What other huge objects does this elephant make you think of?

Individual Follow-Up with Pictures:
Following our discussion, each student receives a picture cut out of a magazine and responds to it in the same way we did as a group: They examine the pictures carefully and then

1. Write out their responses; *or*
2. Present them orally to the rest of the class.

Follow-Up with Poems:

Next, I introduce a poem that has a theme similar to that of the picture we discussed together in class. For instance, to accompany the photograph of the anguished woman, I might choose a poem about war, the death of a loved one, or divorce. I prompt the students to compare the poem and the picture by asking such questions as:

What similarities are there between the picture and the poem?

How are the moods of the picture and poem different?

Could the woman in the picture be feeling the same feelings as are described or suggested in the poem?

Does hearing the poem give you more ideas on what this woman could be thinking?

Does seeing this woman's face make it easier for you to relate to the theme of the poem?

Individual Follow-Up in Writing:

As the final stage of this activity, I ask students to write poems, stories, or one-act plays, using their pictures as inspiration. Most students seem to have ideas already, due to the talking and writing they have done about their pictures.

Grace Cooper
University of the District of Columbia
Washington, D.C.

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Write Your Way Out of This One

descriptions

interviewing skills

Rationale:
These writing assignments are "idea initiators" and begin the process toward a revised and edited product. They are not, therefore, to be graded as finished products. I write *with* my students, and share with them what I've written at the end of each writing period. I find that sharing my writing with my students can be intimidating, but sharing also fosters trust.

Assignment I:

You're a reporter for a large newspaper and have been granted a private interview with the movie star of your dreams. During the interview, you receive a phone call. A mysterious voice tells you that this movie star is going to be assassinated—and when. What will you do?

1. Go to the police to get protection for the star?
2. Keep quiet, be "in on" the assassination, and make a fortune by being the first reporter on the scene and the last person to see the star alive?
3. Get a fellow reporter and try to foil the plot?

Explain your behavior.

Assignment II:

In the yard of an abandoned farmhouse stands a series of gravestones.

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Read the inscriptions carefully, then:

1. Calculate the ages.
2. Estimate the relationships.
3. Describe what you think happened to these people: How did each person die? Illness? A fire? Some other catastrophe?

Assignment III:

Create your own travel brochure for a make-believe city, country, or planet; include illustrations from magazines or drawings of your own to depict what this place would look like if it were real.

Provide intriguing descriptions of all that will be found there:

Recreational activities
Employment opportunities
Educational facilities
Historical buildings
Local customs and foods
Natural scenery

Assignment IV:

You're home alone in bed when you hear a noise.... All your childhood fears return. *Is something in the house?*

You try to dismiss the thought, but your mind keeps inventing new and frightening possibilities: *Where is that noise coming from? What will happen if you get out of bed?*

Describe what might be lurking in the house.

Terry Cooper
Inchelium School
Inchelium, Washington

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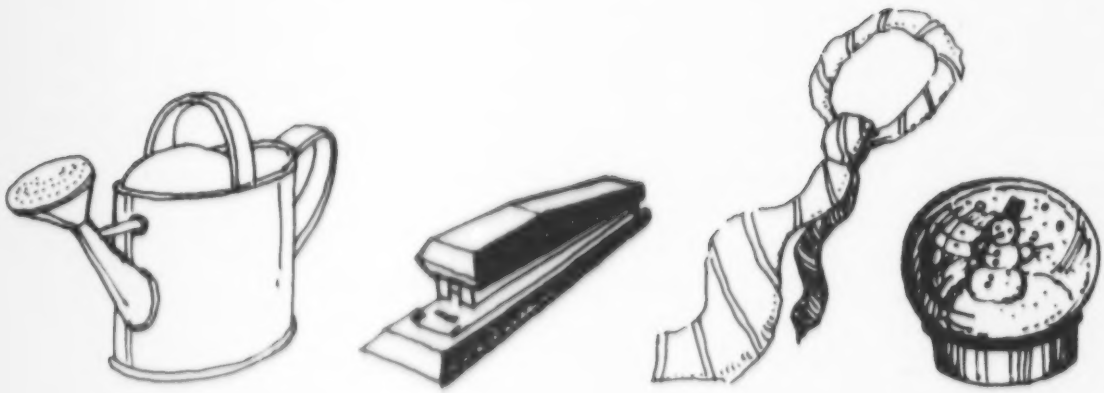
Writing for an Audience

descriptions

guessing

paragraph



Rationale:
Writing for a particular audience for a particular purpose is an effective assignment for producing clear, concise student compositions. I've had success with the following types of assignments.

Preparation:
Bring to class a common object such as a sprinkling can, a stapler, a necktie, or a paperweight, etc. Have your students form small groups of four or five; give each group a different set of instructions for writing about the object.

Assignment I:

Examine the object and describe it so that your reader can walk into a store and pick it out from all others similar to it.

Assignment II:

Write a memo to your superior at the office convincing him or her that this object should be purchased for all the employees in your company.

Assignment III:

Explain to someone who has never seen this object how to use it efficiently.

Assignment IV:

You are an archaeologist 200 years from today. Write in your journal about this object you have just unearthed.

Assignment V:

Suppose you came to school and discovered *you* were the object. How would you spend your day?

Assignment VI:

Tell a story about the object to a kindergarten class.

Writing the Paragraph:
After discussing the object, each group writes a paragraph about it according to the particular assignment you have given them from the list above.

Reading the Paragraph Aloud:
Then a reader from each group reads their paragraph aloud to the class, *without reading the instructions*.

Group Guessing:
The class must guess:

1. What were the group's instructions?
2. For what audience is the writing intended?

Shirley Vaux
Valley View Junior High School
Edina, Minnesota

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Appendix A: Key Descriptors Index

acrostics: 25 (see also *poetry)*
bulletin boards: 28 (see also *visual aids*)
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BOZIK, MARY
"Teaching Inferential Thinking" page 38

I live in Cedar Falls, Iowa and teach speech communication at the University of Northern Iowa. I am particularly interested in the area of listening, and work with teachers on the communication skills.

I have two children, ages 12 and 15, and keep busy by enjoying traveling, dancing, and taking walks.

I love teaching and feel that one of the most valuable things a student can learn is how to communicate. Helping students directly by teaching speaking and listening skills, and helping them indirectly by working with their teachers, contributes to one of the most important educational goals—a literate population.

Mary Bozik
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

COBB, THOMAS M.
"A Dream House" page 1

My name is Thomas—"Tom"—Cobb and I live in University City, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. I teach at Ritenour High School, in another suburb of St. Louis, where I have been an English teacher for all 23 years of my teaching career. Currently I work with four classes of limited ability students and sponsor the school yearbook.

I am very active in professional organizations; in fact, I am one of the coordinators for the National Council of Teachers of English convention that will be held in St. Louis this fall. I am also very active in the Network for Educational Development, an organization which provides staff development opportunities for most of the school districts in the St. Louis area.

I am married to a charming woman who shares many of my interests in music, food, and collecting. We are both singers, exceptionally good cooks, and inveterate collectors—my wife: linens, quilts and vintage clothes; myself: pre-1940 cookbooks and flamingos; and both of us, salt and pepper shakers.

I delight in teaching and have remained in the

classroom my entire career because I feel I can have an impact on students and make a difference.

Thomas M. Cobb
Ritenour High School
St. Louis, Missouri

COOPER, GRACE C.
"Using Pictures to Teach Poetry" page 46

Professionally, I am known as Grace C. Cooper, Ph.D. To my family, I am "Boots" or "Grandma" or "Moms." To some of my colleagues, I am "Amazing Grace," and to some of my friends, I am "Dr. C."

I was born and raised in the capital of the United States, Washington, D.C. Now I live just outside D.C. in Lewisdale, Maryland. I have four children (Tanya, Tecumseh, Marvin Jr., and Mark Alexander) and four grandchildren.

I have taught English in junior and senior high school and now am professor of English Studies, Director of the Writing Program, and a scholar-teacher in the Honors Program at the University of the District of Columbia. My special interests are English language, poetry, drama, American Studies, Black Studies, and cognitive styles. I have published poems, short stories, articles, and over twenty readers and curriculum guides for students and teachers. I am both an actress—in community and school theater—and a playwright. A children's play about the coming-of-age of an African boy in a mythical village is my most successful dramatic writing; *Kojo and the Leopard* has played in school, university, and community theaters around the United States.

Teaching is the only profession that allows me to incorporate all my interests while at the same time guiding younger scholars in developing their own talents and abilities. Material wealth can be lost or stolen or can wear away to dust, but the wealth of the knowledgeable mind is with us throughout our lives.

Grace C. Cooper
University of the District of Columbia
Washington, D.C.

COOPER, TERRY
"Write Your Way Out Of This One" page 49

My name is Terry D. Cooper, but I'm usually just called "Coop!" I was raised in Redmond, Washington, a suburb of Seattle. After graduating from high school, I went straight to Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington, where I landed in the English Department. I had always known I would teach—something in me knew from the beginning, so I spent most of my school years critiquing my teachers in my mind, and sorting out what techniques I would use. I am a writer; therefore English became my major.

I play the guitar, and sing in our church choir. My favorite hobby, though, is playing with my three young sons and laughing with my wife. My philosophy is that children are like plants: given a healthy nurturing environment, they'll naturally grow toward the light. I try to apply this philosophy to my classroom as well as in my home.

Terry Cooper
Inchelium School
Inchelium, Washington

GOLUB, JEFFREY N.
"Obtaining an Honest Writing Sample" page 20

Dr. Golub, "Jeff" to his family and friends, teaches English, speech communication, and pre-college writing classes at Shorecrest High School in Seattle, Washington. He has taught at several other Washington high schools and junior high schools and was the chair of the English department at Mattson Junior High School in Kent, Washington. He has spoken at several NCTE and Speech Communication Association conferences around the country and has conducted communications skills workshops for businesses as well as school districts. He is editor of the Classroom Practices book, ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING, and the author of many articles on speech communication and high school teaching. Currently, he edits the "Computers in the Classroom" column in NCTE's ENGLISH JOURNAL.

Jeffrey N. Golub
Shorecrest High School
Seattle, Washington

HALEY, BEVERLY
"Take This Word and Use It" page 37

My full name is Beverly Ann Jones Haley, but that's often shortened to "Bev" or, in the case of our four grown children, "Mom."

I live in the rural community of Fort Morgan, Colorado, where presently I'm working part-time at Morgan Community College as a newswriter and occasional seminar teacher of writing. I also am a free-lance writer, consultant, and teacher. Although I've taught at all grade levels, most of my experience was teaching English and journalism at Fort Morgan High School. I had the honor of being Colorado Teacher of the Year for 1979.

I enjoy a variety of interests including time with family and friends, tennis, biking, walking, reading, going to quality productions in the performing arts, travel, and playing an active role in selected professional and community activities.

I chose teaching as my profession because I enjoy learning and working with young people and find immeasurable satisfaction and personal reward in being a part of their unfolding as confident, caring, and individually unique human beings. In my view, teaching is the most important profession in the world.

Beverly Haley
Morgan Community College
Fort Morgan, Colorado

HOCHEL, SANDRA
"Speaking Precisely" page 35

Dr. Sandra Hochel resides in Aiken, South Carolina and is a professor of speech communication at the University of South Carolina at Aiken. In addition to teaching, she enjoys jogging, traveling, and spending time with her husband and two daughters.

She developed this exercise because of her specific interest in oral language improvement. She believes that all students—native—as well as non-native speakers—can benefit from such exercises.

Sandra Hochel
University of South Carolina
Aiken, South Carolina

LASK, KATHLEEN FLANAGAN
"Tell-and-Show Dictionary" page 40

I was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, but now live in St. Louis, Missouri.

For 22 years I have been teaching in the public schools, and 17 of those have been at Pattonville Senior High in Maryland Heights, Missouri. As a member of the English department, I have taught everything from English literature to filmmaking.

This past year, I received a Missouri State grant to include computer animation in my filmmaking course. My students make super 8 animation, documentary, and story films, and now will be working with state-of-the-art equipment to make computer-generated video animations.

Working with students actively involved in learning is where the real joy of teaching is.

Kathleen Flanagan Lask
Pattonville Senior High School
Maryland Heights, Missouri

MASON, MARYBETH
"Portraits in Poetry" page 25

I teach at Mountain View High School in Mesa, Arizona. Although I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, I have been living in the deserts of Arizona since I graduated from high school and began attending the University of Arizona in Tucson, later graduating from Arizona State University in Phoenix in 1972. As a teacher of American literature, composition, and speech, I continually strive to improve my teaching and to plan lessons that are relevant to my students.

After 17 years in the teaching profession, I still enjoy the excitement generated in the classroom when my students become involved in activities that challenge them to read, to write, to speak, and to think to the best of their abilities.

When I am not teaching and writing, my husband and I spend much of our time chauffeuring our nine-year-old daughter to dance and music lessons, attending her after-school sports programs, and rescuing our one-year-old daughter from a variety of hair-raising predicaments.

Marybeth Mason
Mountain View High School
Mesa, Arizona

MATHERNE, ANNETTE LEGER
"Adopt-a-Word" page 4

I am Annette Leger Matherne from Houston, Texas. I teach tenth-grade English at Northbrook High School, in the Spring Branch Independent School District of Houston. My special interests include my family, husband, children, and grandchildren. I enjoy gardening, reading, and spending time at our beach home.

I knew when I was in high school that I wanted to be a teacher. After eight years of substitute teaching, and 14 years of teaching, I still enjoy being in the classroom. I try to instill in my students confidence in themselves; if they have this confidence, they have the ability to succeed.

Annette Leger Matherne
Northbrook High School
Houston, Texas

MCLAUGHLIN, GARY L.
"Sentence Combining
as a Pre-Reading Activity" page 33

My hometown is Tacoma, Washington. My special interests and hobbies include theater, the "church of baseball," and golf. I choose to teach because it's a good way to keep from being bored.

Gary L. McLaughlin
Port Angeles High School
Port Angeles, Washington

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MEDNICK, JUDY

"Descriptive Portraits" page 10

My name is Judy Mednick, and I was born in Livingston, New Jersey. Currently I am teaching in the Long Beach Educational Partnership Program, a dropout retrieval school for individuals aged 14 to 35 + . Besides the typical teacher avocations of reading and writing, what I enjoy most are cooking, traveling, and theater. I have chosen to spend most of my life teaching because—to adapt a famous Socratic adage—I believe that the uneducated life is not worth living.

Judy Mednick
Polytechnic High School
Long Beach, California

MILO, CLIFFORD

"One, Two, Three—Testing" page 21

I was born in New York City on August 6, 1945, but my parents moved north into the rural suburbs of Rockland County in 1949. I consider Stony Point, a Hudson River town (and the site of "Mad" Anthony Wayne's Revolutionary War success against the British troops), my hometown. My childhood in these country surroundings enabled me to swim, fish, and roam the woods and trails. As an adult I enjoy the same kinds of activities I did when I was a child—plus reading, classical music, opera, oenology (the science of wine and wine making) and travel. Last summer I was part of a study tour which retraced Captain Jame Cook's first voyage and studied his dicoveries in Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia.

I teach ninth-grade English at Pomona Junior High School in Pomona, New York, not far from where I grew up. My current philosophy for myself and my students is borrowed from Robert Browning: "Our aspirations are our possibilities."

Clifford Milo
Pomona Junior High School
Pomona/Suffern, New York

NEELY, EDNA LORAINE
"Search for Identity;
Or, What's in a Name?" page 30

My name is Edna Loraine Neely. I live in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania and teach English and journalism at Altoona Area High School in Altoona, Pennsylvania. I enjoy reading, photography, sewing, and genealogy (tracing my family tree).

Being a teacher is one of the greatest ways that a person can contribute to society. I feel that working with young people, helping them to prepare for the challenges of the future, has made my life meaningful and fulfilled.

Edna Loraine Neely
Altoona Area High School
Altoona, Pennsylvania

REYNOLDS, PEGGY PERKINS
"Noun Poetry" page 16

I use the "Newspaper in Education" program in all areas of the curriculum. My motivation to work in the area of Special Education is "to turn on the turned off."

Peggy Perkins Reynolds
Wooddale High School
Memphis, Tennessee

SHULTZ, DONALD L.
"Contrasting Moods" page 6

I'm "Mr. Shultz" to my students, "Dad" to my teenage son and daughter, but to most everyone else, including my wife, I'm simply "Shultz."

I've been teaching English at Dana Junior High School in Arcadia, California for 21 years and am fond of the warm and comfortable rapport that has developed among the fun-loving but professional group of people with whom I work, and the ever-challenging, high-spirited personalities of young teenagers. One night a week I teach English to adults, most of them immigrants wanting to improve their language skills. That is a special treat because adults restore the self-worth that teenagers sometimes knock out of me. When I'm not buried up to my eyeballs in essays to grade, I enjoy working in the yard, bicycling, jogging, and planning for vacation adventures. My family spends most of each summer in our motorhome, traveling throughout North America, and we try to get in as many ski trips during the winter as we can afford.

I teach because now and then I help some kid to grow up, and he or she helps me to stay young.

Donald L. Shultz
Dana Junior High School
Arcadia, California

SPURLOCK, KENNETH K.
"Novel Dialogue" page 18

My full name is Kenneth K. Spurlock, but my friends call me "Ken." I live in Villa Hills, Kentucky and teach ten miles away at Holmes High School in Covington, Kentucky. I enjoy reading science fiction and playing tennis in my spare time. I chose to be an English teacher because I feel I am teaching the most important skills a student can learn: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Kenneth K. Spurlock
Holmes High School
Covington, Kentucky

VAUX, SHIRLEY
"Writing for an Audience" page 51

Presently I am Assistant Principal of Edina Senior High School in Edina, a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota. For eighteen years previously, I taught language arts at Valley View, Edina's junior high school. My hobbies are free-lance writing, golf, and gardening.

I made education my profession because here I can combine my love for learning with my love for working with young people. I feel I have a part in "building for a better tomorrow."

Shirley Vaux
Edina Senior High School
Edina, Minnesota

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Appendix C: Contributors' Map

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